

Culture

Secondary school in the UK

Learning objectives

- The students learn about the secondary school system in England and Wales and compare it with the one in their own country.
- In the project stage, the students make a webpage about their own school.

Useful vocabulary

A level AS level comprehensive (school) GCSE
secondary school subject term

Warmer

Write these anagrams of school subjects on the board. Do the first one as an example and then see which student can find the rest first.

ismuc – music

loigybo (biology) ythoisr (history) hglesni (English)

aoghregyp (geography) tyechismr (chemistry)

semaathicm (mathematics)

Cultural background

The education system in England and Wales is divided into pre-school (ages 3–4), primary education (ages 4–11), secondary education (ages 11–16), sixth form (16–18) and tertiary education (ages 18+). Over 90% of pupils go to state schools, where the education is free, and they follow a national curriculum which standardises subjects, syllabuses and assessment. Confusingly, old and prestigious independent schools like Eton are called public schools, although they are not in the state system.

- 1** Ask the students *What is the name of the school teenagers go to in Britain?* (secondary school)
Do children go to school on Saturdays? (in state schools – no; in some private schools – yes) *Do they have lunch at school?* (usually) *Do boys and girls study together?* (in state schools – yes)

Arrange the students into pairs to discuss what else they know about secondary schools in Britain. They then check with the webpage.

- 2** Ask *How many breaks do the students have in a day?* (two)

The students read the page again and complete the chart. Make sure they know what kind of information they are looking for, for example **4** will be a month of the year.

Answers

- 1** Sixth form
2 GCSEs (*General Certificate of Secondary Education*)
3 A levels **4** September **5** two **6** July **7** six

Extension activity

Ask *How many A levels do students take?* (three)

Tell the students to read the page again and answer these questions:

What is a comprehensive school?

What subjects are compulsory (= you must do them) at GCSE?

What do a lot of students do after A levels?

Answers

- 1** A comprehensive school takes children of all abilities.
2 English, maths and science are compulsory subjects.
3 A lot of students go to university after A levels.

- 3** Ask the students about things which are similar and different in schools in their country.

Put the students into groups to discuss this and write a sentence about each difference. See which group can find the most differences / write the most sentences. Encourage the students to use the information in the chart about British schools as a guide.

- 4** Ask the students what sort of information their school has on their website.

Then tell the students to look at the text and ask *What's the name of this school?* (Woodedge) *Is it a private school?* (No, it's a comprehensive school.)


Tell the students to read the information and answer the questions.

Answers

- 1** 18 **2** to the National Theatre **3** four **4** trainers **5** no
6 Because they give £1 to charity so they don't have to wear their uniform, and they can bring extra money because there will be things to buy.

Extension activity

Get the students to draw, label and describe a school uniform. It could include fun things, for example, a belt with a water bottle for hot days, different colour ties/skirts to show which are the best pupils, running shoes so pupils can get to class quickly.

- 5  1.26 Books closed, tell the students they are going to listen to a student from the school, Aleesha. Ask what questions they would like to ask her, for example, *What year are you in? What's your favourite subject?* The students check if their questions are the same as in the book.

Play the recording for the students to answer the questions.

Audioscript

My school, Woodedge, is a comprehensive with 1,200 pupils. It's a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic school in London. That means we have people from lots of different backgrounds in our school. For example, I'm Asian, but in my class there are people who are Afro-Caribbean, East European, African, and lots more. It's great because we learn about each other's cultures, festivals and languages – it's really interesting.

My school day begins at 8.35 and ends at 3 o'clock. We have six lessons a day. We also have PDT every day – that's personal development time. We often talk about what's in the news. We sometimes also talk about money – how to open a bank account and that sort of thing.

We have a break in the morning and a break at lunchtime. I eat in the school café every day. The food's quite nice. There's always a hot meal, like beef curry or roast chicken, or you can buy sandwiches. Our parents put money into a school account online for us and then we pay for our lunch with a card.

After school, we have lots of different clubs to choose from. This term I'm doing singing and badminton. Last term I did table tennis and drama club. They're good fun and we don't have to pay for them.

We've got Charity Day next Friday. It's always really good fun. We're all making things to bring to school and sell. I'm making cakes and my friend's making biscuits. I hope we sell a lot and make lots of money for Save the Children!

Answers

- 1 1,200 2 She is Asian. 3 3.00 pm
4 what's in the news; money 5 hot food and sandwiches
6 She has a card. (Her parents put money into an online account which she accesses with the card.)
7 singing and badminton 8 cakes

Extension activity

The students work in pairs. One student asks the questions and the other answers them as Aleesha. The students could add two more questions which 'Aleesha' will answer using her imagination.

- 6 Arrange the students into pairs. Tell them to go through the categories and compare their school with Woodedge. They should discuss which things are better in their school and which are better in Woodedge.

Extension activity

Have an open class discussion on these topics:

What is the best age for children to start school?

What subjects could be added to / taken away from the school programme?

Will children in the future still need to go to school or will they study at home?

Project

- Tell the students that they have to make a new school webpage. Ask them who it is useful for (parents, new students, etc.) and what kind of information/pictures it could contain.
- Arrange the students into groups. They could do this project in class or do it as homework, collecting information individually, then putting it together and checking it in class. The students should use the Woodedge website as a model and include some pictures and artwork. (They may need to take some photos for this and they could even make a short video.) They could look at school websites online to get some extra ideas. The students could make their website as a real webpage or turn it into a poster.
- In class, students should present and compare their websites. Decide which website has got the best content and which one has got the nicest presentation.

Cooler

The students think of five crazy activities for an alternative school sports day. Give some ideas like underwater badminton and hotdog eating (speed and quantity).